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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: Afghanistan, Missile Defense, G20, Climate Change, UN, Mideast Peace Process, Travel Promotion Act, German Elections

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- [1. Lead Stories](#)

Primetime newscasts and many newspapers opened with stories on the upcoming Bundestag elections, focusing particularly on the CSU's promises to cut taxes. S|ddeutsche led with a story headlined "West threatened with defeat in Afghanistan." Editorials focused on the CSU's promise to cut taxes and on a controversy over the German electoral system.

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Frankfurter Allgemeine commented: "McChrystal's assessment is dramatic, and due to its clarity there will not be great rejoicing in the White House, the Congress and among NATO partners. McChrystal's conclusion is unambiguous: we either have to increase troop levels dramatically and adopt a new strategy to fight insurgents, or the international engagement will fail. The alternative is so crystal clear-the moment of truth has come for politicians in America and other NATO countries. They must make a great effort to counter the skepticism among their people and the irresponsible advice to leave the country immediately. President Obama has delivered many great speeches; now he must deliver on Afghanistan and make clear why the engagement is necessary."

Under the headline "And another strategy," Sueddeutsche's commentary highlighted that "the new commander in Afghanistan wants to change everything." The paper skeptically concluded: "Above all, the right

idea to deal with the difficult Karzai government and the Taliban is painfully missing. The mission on Afghanistan is tumbling from one strategy to another. An impression of a crude tactic remains."

Regional Pforzheimer Zeitung editorialized: "The fact that so many Germans reject the mission in Afghanistan might have several reasons. However, one of them certainly is that the German government is not resolutely standing by it. There is no reason to feel ashamed of that. With the principal decision in favor of the fight in Afghanistan, the government represents the interests of the people more clearly than any other area. We can debate the strategy and the size of the troops, but not the mission in Afghanistan."

### 13. Climate Change

Sueddeutsche commented: "The interests of the large countries of this world-from China to the United States-are too different to let us hope for a climate agreement.... Europe is at risk of becoming a continent of nice words. The EU took the lead in the fight for climate protection, but the alacrity clearly waned in recent months.

The EU member states are starting too few common research initiatives... Regardless of how tough climate change will hit Europe, the world needs new and renewable energy resources that produce less carbon dioxide. If the EU focuses more on research it could not only fight climate change but also exit more successfully from the economic crisis."

In a front-page commentary on the G20 and the UN, Tagesspiegel

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noted: "The climate and financial crises share the fact that both are the result of a gigantic failure of the market. In the case of climate change, the rationality of the markets failed to assess the real price of economic activities.... Only politicians can influence climate change in a way that its consequences do not lead to disaster."

Under the headline "Yes we can-but not yet," Spiegel Online reported from Washington that "the post-Kyoto agreement is the main focus of the UN summit in New York, but the U.S. is stuck in a climate debate. Environmental protection has many opponents-and they are well-organized. Even his own party is stabbing President Obama in his back."

### 14. G20 Summit

Die Welt commented: "'When in doubt, national interests will be the priority of the new tenant of the White House. Obama will oppose any measures at the G20 summit this week in Pittsburgh that could in any form limit Wall Street's international dominance. Hopes for creating a new financial world are waning. Particularly Obama must be blamed, although he is not the only one responsible for it. What about principles? They come second. The purpose is more important, like in the case of tire imports from China, on which Obama just imposed heavy punitive tariffs. This move ridicules all of his fancy speeches on free trade.... Obama does not think much of partners and principles as soon as they are unfavorable.... Europeans and their politicians would be well-advised to realize where they stand. Obama is a very normal politician.... If Europe wants to make sure that progress is made, it must take the initiative itself. It is not be good enough to hope for America to lead the way selflessly."

### 15. Missile Defense

Frankfurter Allgemeine editorialized on its front-page: "There is no doubt that the decision not to deploy a missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic removed an obstacle that was dividing Washington and Moscow... The first keynote speech of NATO Secretary General Rasmussen on a new beginning of relations and the offer to cooperate with Russia on missile defense, which was synchronized with Obama's announcement, shows that a diplomatic knot was supposed to be cut... The speech of a new beginning describes the situation better than that of the reset button, which suggested that an existing program had to be rebooted. .. Can America expect

something in return for its renunciation? For Moscow, the move is only a sign that Obama's friendly words are followed by action. We might see indications of whether Russia is prepared to take action when Obama meets President Medvedev on the margins of the G20 and when the negotiations on a post-START agreement take place. Obama's announcement loosened the American-Russia knot, it did not cut it. That won't be possible."

#### 16. UN-U.S. Relations

Sueddeutsche carried a feature on the President Obama's presence at the UN summit this week, highlighting that "when Barack Obama was elected President Europeans hoped to be able to look for common solutions with the U.S. in the framework of the United Nations. However, they are now facing a solo run by Obama. The UN General Assembly in New York will serve him as a stage on which he can present himself to his people at home as a leader of the world. Ban Ki-moon, the weak UN Secretary General has little resistance to offer."

#### 17. Mideast Peace Process

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Under the headline "Low Expectations-Israel will insist on settlements during the Mideast summit," Sueddeutsche reported in its intro: "Prior to this Tuesday's planned summit between President Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Abbas, Palestinians and Israelis have lowered expectations. Both sides suggested that they only want to explain to Obama their opposing points of view."

Tagesspiegel commented: "Mission not achieved, goal reached. The American Mideast envoy Mitchell failed to lead the Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table. However, the trilateral meeting with Obama is still taking place in New York today. The meeting will hardly produce more than nice photos from which only Obama and Netanyahu will benefit, not Abbas. Even among Abbas' people it is bitterly realized that the meeting is a victory for Netanyahu because he did not comply with Obama's call for a building freeze. Obama can show the world that he is still actively engaged in the attempts to create peace in the Middle East. Abbas stands accused of having yielded and being weak."

#### 18. Travel Promotion Act

Under the headline: "The entry fee has to go," Saechsische Zeitung editorialized: "This whole endeavor is outrageous, annoying and simply unacceptable. And it is downright paradoxical to justify the introduction of this fee by calling it an instrument for travel promotion.... If you ask for an admission fee, you hinder rather than promote tourism, particularly since excessive security regulations are already deterring many EU citizens from implementing their (U.S.) travel plans. Last but not least, the concept is hurting the U.S. reputation at a time when the country is still suffering from (its bad image) under the Bush Administration. It is thus in the best U.S. interest to forego this fee. However, this also means that the EU countries must speak up - clearly and with one voice."

#### 19. German Elections

Norddeutscher Rundfunk radio commented: "Angela Merkel is a precision mechanic of power who always considers the likely outcome before she takes action... One of these cases is to continue the grand coalition after the German elections. She likes this idea better than she publicly admits because as long as she is Chancellor nobody will be a threat to her."

Die Welt commented: "This election campaign is most remarkable, not just because the candidates have little to say and their well-performed presentations do not conceal that they are boring and lack content. The fact that the most important topic is not debated makes this election campaign unique. The financial and economic crisis with its consequences for public budgets and the prosperity of the people is playing a minor role so far. Politicians are

refusing to debate this and voters are caught in the mire."

MURPHY